

## **Historic, Archive Document**

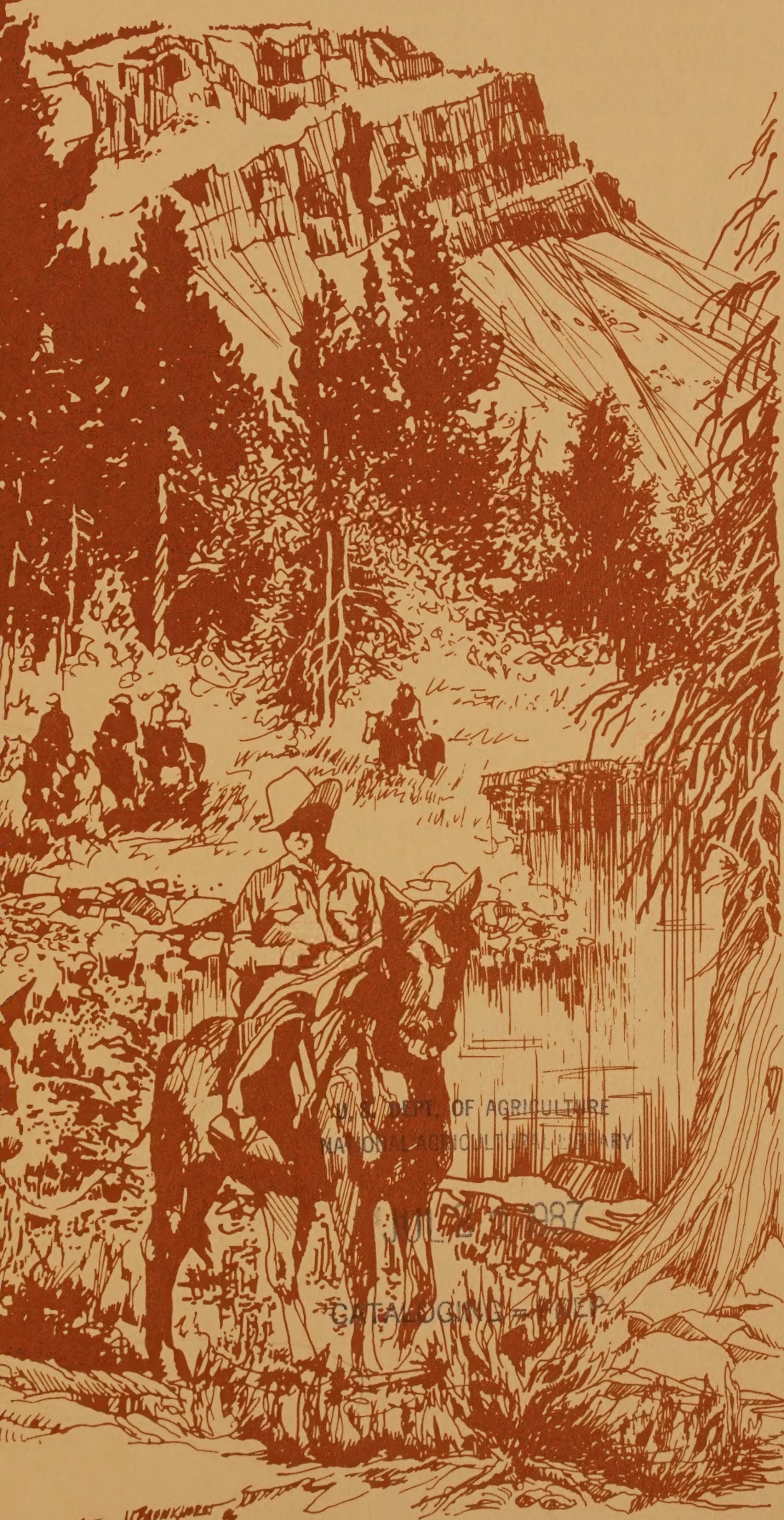
Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.





aGV199  
.7  
.H6

# HORSE SENSE ON NATIONAL FOREST PACK TRIPS



U.S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE  
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY

JUL 27 1987

CATALOGING - PREP



Pack trips into the National Forests of the Northern Region are becoming more popular, and the wear and tear on the backcountry, even by careful users, is becoming more evident. The concepts presented here are designed to increase your enjoyment of the backcountry while minimizing impacts and permitting increased use of the resource. Before the lure of the backcountry draws you away from the everyday cares, please devote some thought to these ideas.

Enjoy the National Forests, but ride and camp carefully, as the scars made on the land heal slowly.

## Planning Your Trip

Before you go, contact the local Ranger Station for maps, trail information, and forage availability for the area you want to visit. The Ranger can tell you about lesser used trails that will give you some solitude. This also gives you a chance to learn about trail segments with hazards such as bogs, steep grades, rocks, and roots. If possible, plan your trip to avoid high-use holidays, weekends, and the wet soil conditions common early and late in the season. Be sure to ask about the regulations that apply to your destination area, particularly party size and stock limits.

Use gentle, well-broken animals in good condition. If you can, use horses and mules that know each other; there will be less fighting and straying from grazing grounds. Know your stock: Which is the leader? Which is the slowest traveler? The speed of the pack string is the speed of the slowest animal.

Use properly fitted pack-and-saddle gear. Lightweight camp equipment will let you use fewer pack animals and make it easier on both the stock and the backcountry.

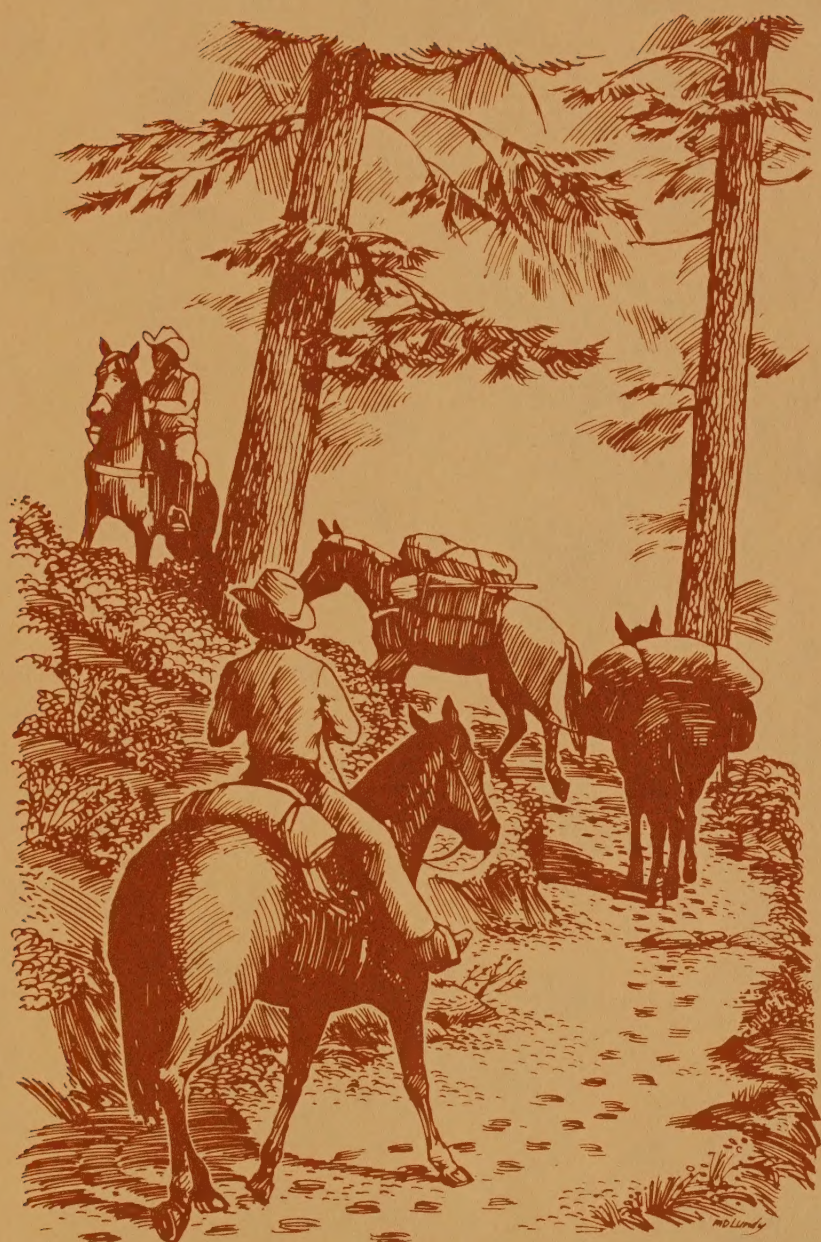
## No-Trace Techniques

On the trail and in camp, no-trace techniques let you enjoy wild areas while minimizing change or damage. These techniques will help keep the backcountry qualities from being diminished by overuse.

### On The Trail

*Trail Switchbacks:* Stay on trails. Cutting across switchbacks cause erosion and could cause injury to you or your stock.





*"Stay on the trail. Shortcutting swithbacks causes erosion and could lead to injury to you and your stock."*

## **In Camp**

*Site Selection:* Locate camps at least 200 feet from the nearest water, trails, and other campers and away from meadows. Select a spot where you won't have to clear vegetation or level a tentsite. Saddles, cinches, and other sweaty gear ought to be stored near camp—small rodents or deer seeking salt will chew on them and can destroy them or leave them in a weakened condition. An extra salt chunk will remove the temptation for deer to chew up your prized saddle!

*Improvements:* Rock walls, log benches, lean-tos, and other "improvements" detract from the natural land-



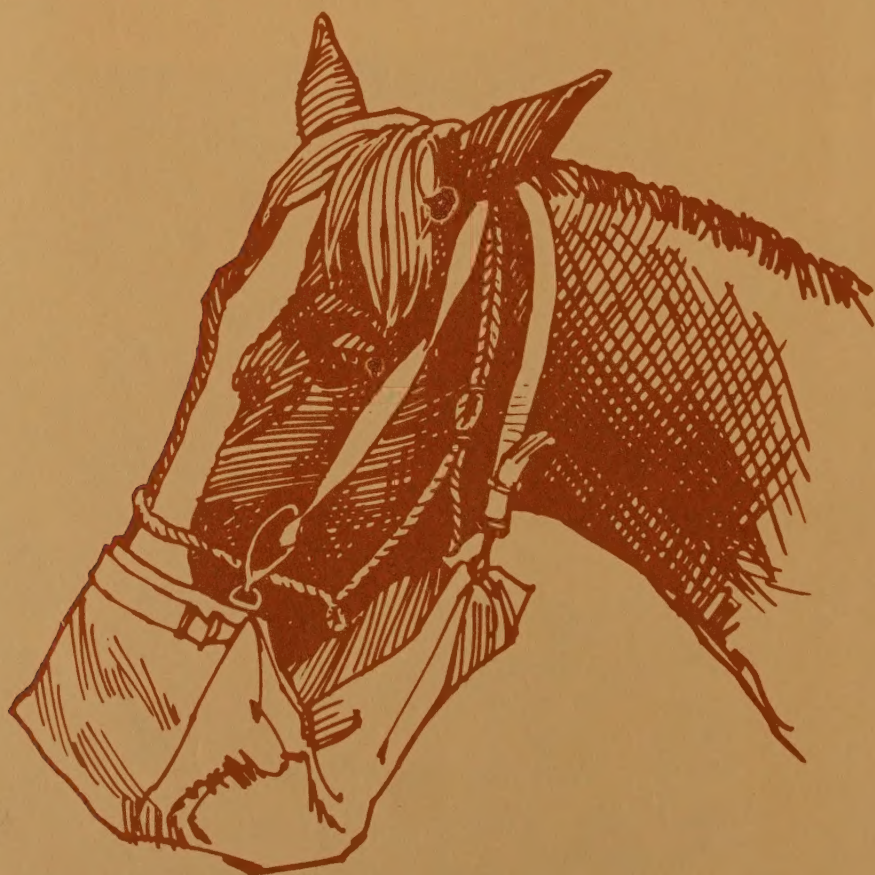
scape. If you must construct them, use native materials and a primitive style so they may be easily dismantled. In a designated Wilderness, permanent placement of structures is prohibited.

*Sanitation:* Human waste and toilet paper must be disposed of properly. Placed in a six-inch-deep "cat hole," they will be quickly recycled by soil micro-organisms. Burning tissue helps the process, but be careful. Burning tissue has been known to cause wildfires. Tissue should only be burned in the "cat hole" and when there is no fire hazard. When in doubt, bury the tissue.

*Soaps and Detergents:* Soaps and detergents (even biodegradable brands) must be kept out of lakes and streams. Wash dishes, hands and face, and brush teeth in a container and dispose of the wastewater at least 200 feet from water sources.

*Your Stock:* Confine pack and saddle stock at least 200 feet from streams, lakeshores, trails, and camping areas. Rotate them through the area to reduce trampling and overgrazing. Place a picket line between two eight-inch-diameter trees over hardened ground where vegetation damage can be avoided. Use a highline or hobbles to restrain stock and prevent trampling of tree roots. Move your pickets frequently to avoid grazing an area to below three inches of stubble height.

Pack-in supplemental feed, processed grain and haycakes or pellets, to cut down on grazing time. Feeding the grain in nosebags morning and evening will show your stock that camp is "home."



*"Use a nosebag to feed supplemental grain to stock. This enables a full ration to be eaten without waste."*



*Fires:* Cook on lightweight stoves. If fires are allowed, save them for the luxury of evening bragging sessions or for unusually wet or cold weather. Use only dead and down, small diameter wood. Keep your fires small, and let them burn down to a fine ash. Attend all fires while they are burning, make sure they are dead out when you leave.

*Breaking Camp:* Burn what trash you can and pack out the rest. Remember, aluminum foil won't burn completely, and animals will dig up any buried trash, so please pack it out. Scatter rocks used for fire rings and any ash, charcoal, and unused firewood. Break up and scatter horse manure. Scout the area to make sure nothing will be left behind. Fill in any pawed holes. Return the site to its natural state and broadcast a covering of needles and cones.

## Trail Courtesy

In the backcountry, a few suggestions about courtesy will help make life more pleasant for everyone:

- During fire season, NO SMOKING WHILE TRAVELING. Stop and smoke only in safe spots.
- Consider carrying a shovel, axe, and water container. They are useful for fire safety and camp sanitation purposes.
- Observe the basics of trail right-of-way:
  - Hikers should yield to animal traffic, but not all of them may know that. If you encounter hikers who are unfamiliar with horses, ask them to hold up until you pass. Don't be overbearing.
  - A loaded pack string has the right-of-way.
  - In steep, rough country down-hill traffic yields to uphill animal traffic.

Use your horse sense! If you have a better place to pull off, do so, and let the other folks pass through. For the safety of all users, keep your horse to a walk on trails. Riding in small groups will enhance the wilderness experience as well as reduce dust problems. When encountering hikers, offer a greeting—a courteous exchange also reduces the chance of your horse being scared by the hiker.

## Animal Care And Handling

### Packing

Remember to use the lightest gear you can find, to make the trip easier on the land and your stock. Use lightweight plastic containers instead of glass. Consider



using dehydrated foods; they really are quite good.

Manta tarps, pack covers, and panniers are often used for packing and can be put to other uses around camp. Used as ground covers, storage, or kitchen flies, they will eliminate much of the need for constructing improvements.

Consider bringing a few spare horseshoes, nails and shoeing equipment. Slip-on emergency shoes made of urethane are a handy alternative (they fit over and around the hoof like a boot and are held in place by a cable and buckle system).

Take along insect repellent and veterinary medicines to treat wounds. In an emergency, use bacon grease to soothe sores and chafes and flour to stop minor bleeding. Load saddlebags lightly with emergency gear or lunch—remember, you are load enough. Put heavy gear on the pack stock. Pad rattles in the load.

### **On the Trail**

In rough country, use extreme caution so you don't put your animals' lives at risk. In boggy places and slide zones, on slick and steep trails, through deep water and snow, let your stock pick their way through or get off and lead them through the treacherous stretches. Remember to keep your stock on the trail tread, particularly on tight switchbacks.

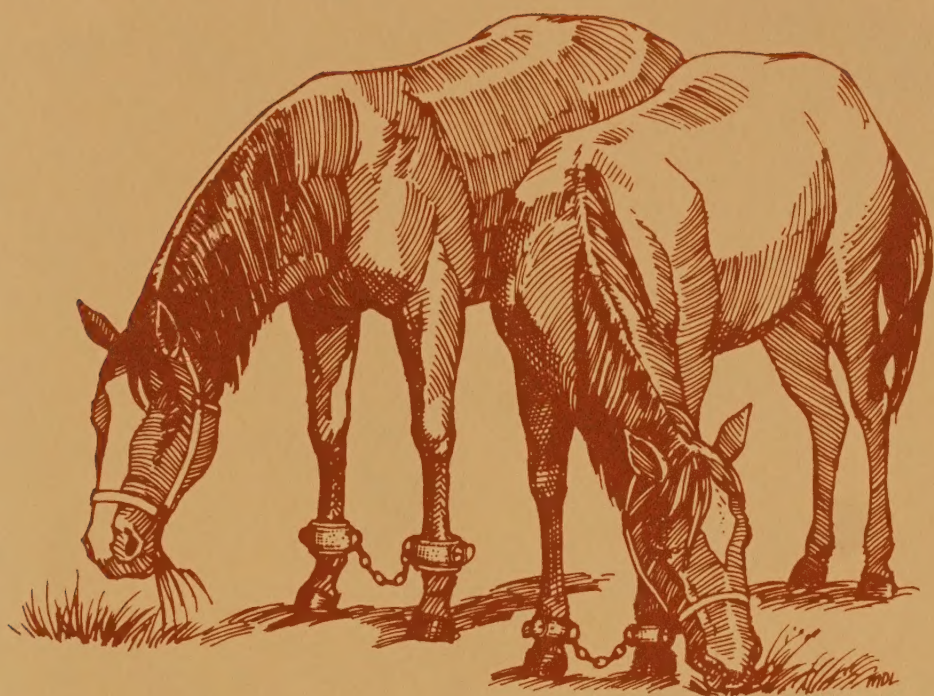
### **In Camp**

Stock can be kept from straying in several ways without tying them to young trees. If you must tie a habitual wanderer to a tree, choose one at least eight inches in diameter and tend to it often. Stock tied directly to young trees can girdle and eventually kill the trees. Horses with a tendency to paw and stomp tree bark and roots should be hobbled. Permitting hot, sweaty stock to roll as soon as possible after unloading seems to decrease restlessness and pawing.

*Hitching Rails:* If you prefer, stock can be tied to a hitching rail or dead pole. Lash a four-to-six-inch-diameter pole between your trees, placing padding or wooden shims under the lash ropes to protect the bark. Using nails or wire can cause long-term damage to trees and should be avoided.

*Hobbles:* A hobble gives a horse enough freedom to graze while restricting its movements to a small area. However, some horses soon learn to wander quite freely with a hobble. For these explorers it may be necessary to place a half-hobble on one rear leg and attach it to the hobble in front. A bell on a hobbled horse makes it easier to locate in brushy country, or when it roams too far. But bells are usually needed only on lead stock, and should





*"Stock that tends to wander while grazing can be restrained by using a hobble on the front legs."*

be used only if you are camping far from other parties.

Horses should be watched closely if they have not been hobbled or picketed recently, because they may injure themselves. It's best to be sure they are familiar with pickets and hobbles before you ride into the back-country.

*Corrals:* If permanent corrals are available at trailheads or designated horse camps, use them. If you plan to spend many days in one spot, you may desire a temporary corral. There are three types of temporary corrals:

- *Pole Corrals:* Pole corrals are practical where pole-sized deadfall is abundant. Poles are lashed to trees using wooden shims or gunnysacks to protect the bark.
- *Rope Corrals:* Rope corrals are not as secure as pole corrals, but they are easier to rig and move, and they don't require native poles.
- *Electric Fences:* Electric fencing may be the most convenient temporary corral for stock trained to respect it. It is lightweight and easily put up and moved.



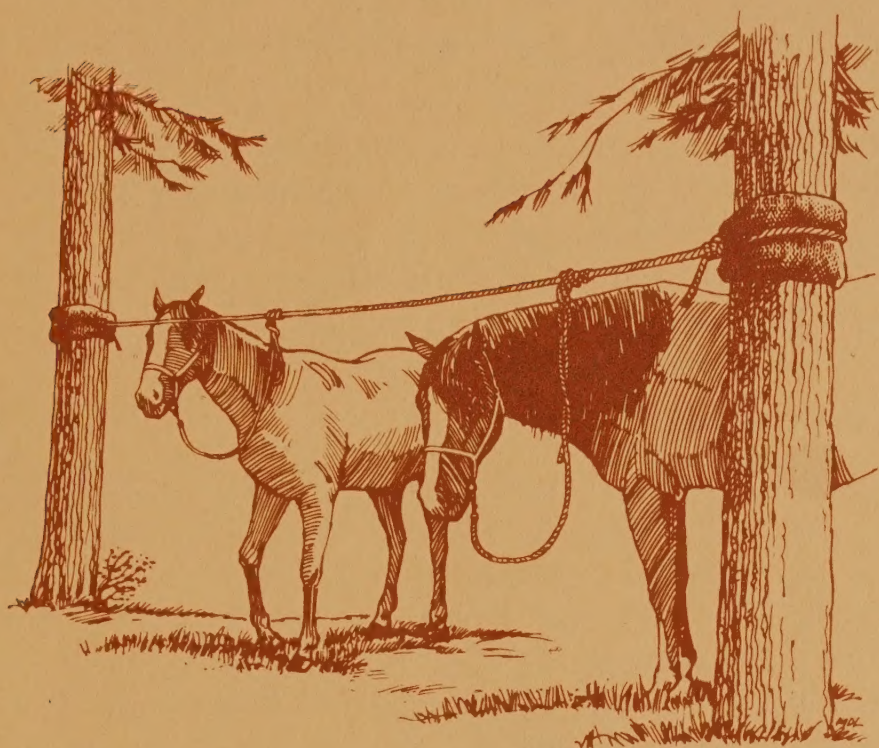


*"Single animals can be restrained while grazing by using a half-hobble and a length of rope to tether one front leg to a picket pin."*

*Pickets and Stakes:* To restrain one horse, a single picket pin may be driven into the ground and a 30 to 40-foot rope attached, depending on the size of the area. Attach to a hobble placed on one of the front legs, not to a halter or lead rope. The area should be free of obstacles so the rope cannot become entangled. The picket pin should be moved frequently to prevent trampling and overgrazing. When you break camp, be sure to remove the picket pin so others will not use the same spot and overgraze the area.



*Picket Lines:* Locate a hardened or bare area between two large trees for your picket line. Stretch your line between the trees using your pack cinches or tree-saver straps to prevent chafing or girdling. The line should be as high as the horse's head (and avoid a loosely looped lead rope). This allows them more freedom of movement while reducing the likelihood of getting tangled or hurt.



*"To form a picket line, stretch a rope, horse's head high, between two eight-inch diameter trees."*

*Feed:* Plan on carrying supplemental feed for your stock. In many backcountry areas forage is limited and grazing may be restricted or unavailable. Inquire at the local Ranger Station about the conditions so you will know how much supplemental feed to carry.

Use a nosebag to feed oats or pellets, and keep the animal tied while the nosebag is on. Pouring feed on the ground may seed the site with noxious weeds or non-native plant species. Also, the animals may trample it and not get a full ration. Be certain your stock is accustomed to the type of feed you plan to bring, since a radical change of diet could leave you walking.

While your trip is still in the planning stage, find out whether hay and unprocessed feed are allowed in your chosen area. Because of the introduction of noxious weeds and non-native plants, the use of hay may be prohibited in some areas. Haynets of polypropylene rope are good for feeding loose hay where it is allowed. Haynets will keep the animals busy for several hours picking at the hay. Be sure to take weed-free hay whenever possible.



## Checklist

- \_\_\_\_\_ Check with the local Ranger Station about campsite availability. Hardened, established sites may be available. Otherwise, select a timbered, well-drained site.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Take only as much gear as you need for the trip.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use freeze-dried foods and lightweight gear.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Plan to take as few animals as possible.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Be aware of weather conditions and insect pests—repellent is a must.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use lightweight, earth-colored equipment.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Stay on trails and avoid shortcuts that cause erosion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Travel in small groups.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Choose a tent site where drainage will not be a problem, avoiding the need to trench.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Dig six-inch “cat holes” for human waste at least 200 feet from camp and water sources.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Rotate picketed, grazing stock through an area to minimize trampling and overgrazing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use picket lines or hobbles to distribute stock and prevent trampling of tree roots. Move picket pins often. Don’t tie stock to small trees.
- \_\_\_\_\_ “Tie two.”: Providing a nervous horse with company will eliminate much cause for pawing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Protect saddles and bridles from salt-seeking wildlife.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Confine stock at least 200 feet from shorelines and streams. Lead horses to water where streambanks won’t cave in.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Place hitch rails, corrals and picket lines on hard, rocky soils or in open timbered stands at least 200 feet from campsites.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cook on lightweight stoves, especially those with refillable fuel cannisters.
- \_\_\_\_\_ If fires are allowed, use only dead-and-downed wood, and only as much as you need.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cut wood in short lengths so horses are not needed to drag it to camp, ripping sod and causing erosion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Save fires for the luxury of an evening talk or poor weather; keep fires small.

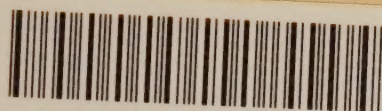


- Wash with biodegradable soap and dispose of waste water well back from water sources.
- Pack-in processed grains and hay pellets where grass is scarce; feed from nosebags. Beware of unwittingly introducing noxious weeds and weed seeds.
- When breaking camp, return the spot to its natural state as much as possible by scattering rocks, logs, unused wood, and horse manure. Broadcast a covering of needles and cones.
- Check campsites to be sure nothing is left. Search for those stray bottle caps, cigarette butts, and scattered junk and pack them out too.
- Sacks or bags that were packed-in full can be used to pack-out extra trash, and will still be much lighter than before.

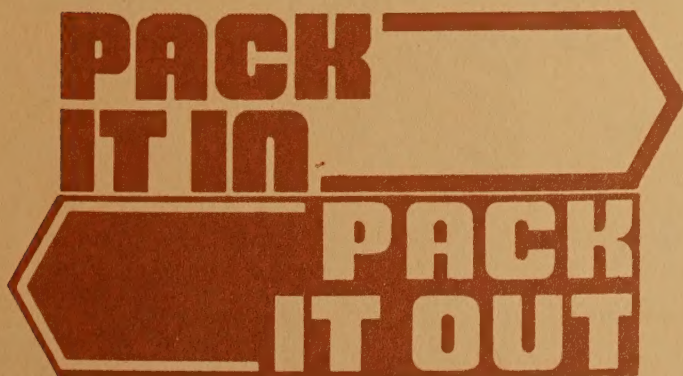
A few days in a remote, campsite can restore and refresh a tired spirit. Mount up and head for backcountry—have a pleasant, relaxing trip!

For more information about the National Forests of the Northern Region, write:

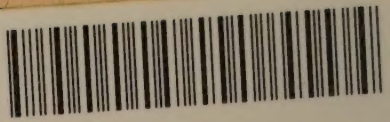
**USDA Forest Service**  
**Northern Region**  
**P.O. Box 7669**  
**Missoula, MT 59807**  
**(406) 329-3511**



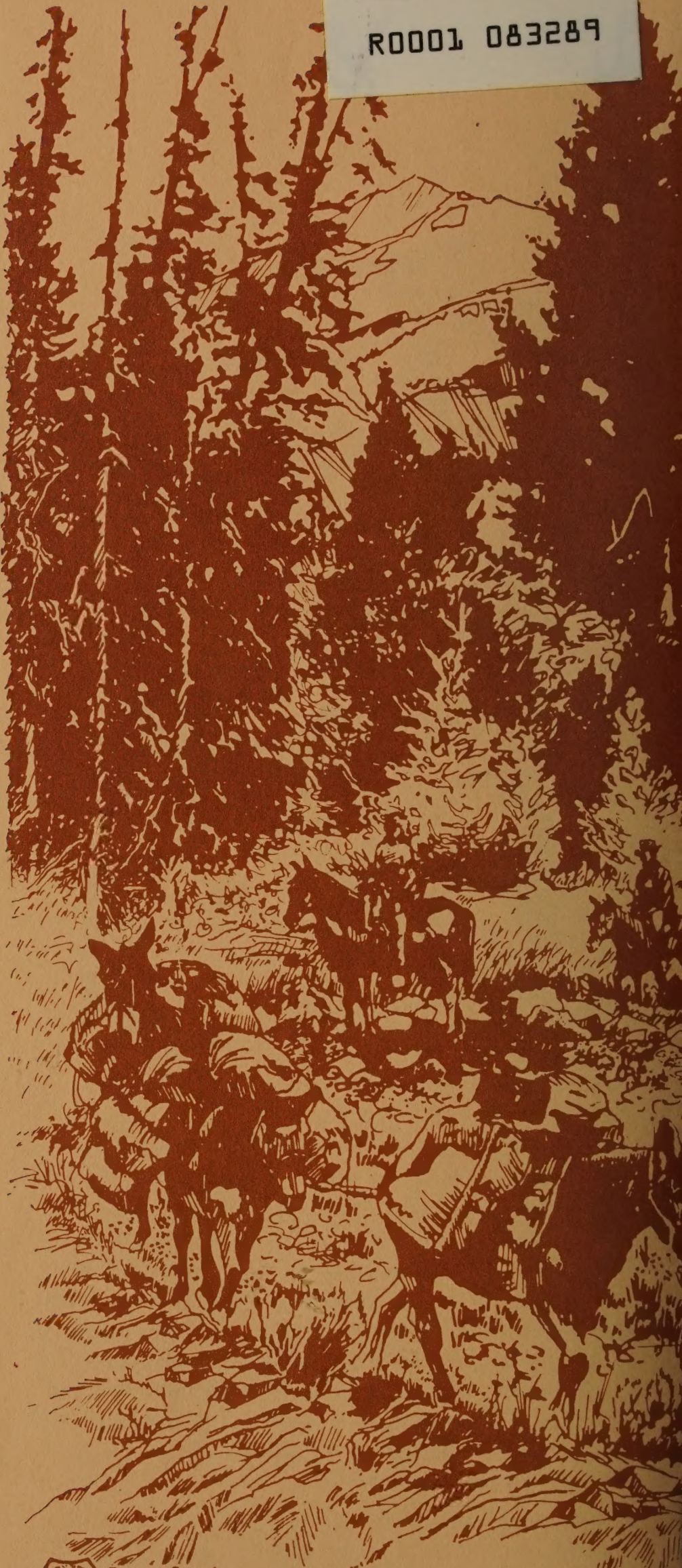
R0001 083289







R0001 083289



Forest Service  
Northern Region

R1 - 84 - 11

GPO 695 - 564 (1966)